

Pled Honeyeater. June 22, July 4, July 28.

Yellow-fronted Honeyeater. February 28, March 27.

Black Swan. Heard flying south during the evening of May 24.

Black-capped Sittella. September 26.

The following birds were not seen but are known to the natives in the area:

Black-fronted Dotterel

Tawny Frogmouth

Southern Stone Curlew

Some information on bird movements is available from recoveries of Corvids banded at Jigalong during 1959.

The trapping programme was started in June using a trap with a roof entrance and a funnel on the ground. By November when trapping was discontinued 63 birds had been trapped, of which 61 were Little Crows and 2 were Crows.

Three recoveries of Little Crows have occurred to date:

1. No. 100-04124, banded on June 16 and recovered at Walgun on June 28, 10 miles north.
2. No. 100-04119, banded on June 14 and recovered at Mt. Weld Station near Laverton on November 11, 390 miles S.S.E.
3. No. 100-04130, banded on June 30 and recovered 4 miles south of Menzies on April 29, 1960, 435 miles S.

In addition eleven birds were retrapped in the same trap as they were banded from, the longest time interval being shown by no. 100-04135, banded on June 23 and retrapped on October 5.

ABLEPHARUS BOUTONII CLARUS, A NEW SKINK FROM THE ESPERANCE DISTRICT, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Probably the most widely distributed of all lizards, *Ablepharus boutonii*, ranges from coastal East Africa, through the archipelagoes of the Western Indian Ocean to the Lesser Sundas, Moluccas, New Guinea, Australia and most islands in the tropical Pacific. In his monograph of the species, Mertens (1931) described or re-defined 36 geographical races, allotting three of them to continental Australia, *viz.* *metallicus* Boulenger for the centre and north-west, *virgatus* Jarman for the north-east (from Cape York to Rockhampton) and *plagiocephalus* Cocteau for the south.

Cocteau's name, like the later *Ablepharus peronii* of Duméril and Bibron, is based on the manuscript description by Péron of a skink from "Tasmania and Shark Bay." Since no form of the species occurs in Tasmania, Mertens restricted the name *plagiocephalus* to the Australian mainland. He gave the distribution of the race as the "whole of southern Australia from New South

Wales and Victoria to at least Shark Bay and perhaps a little further north."

However, Mertens' re-definition of *plagiocephalus* is based solely on material from Western Australia: two specimens in the Senckenburg Museum from "West-Australien," one of which is the type of *punctatus* Sternfeld; two in the Hamburg Museum from Kalgoorlie; and six in the Berlin Museum (one each from Guildford and York and four labelled "Sud-Australien, Preiss"). It was possibly the last label that induced Mertens to attribute *plagiocephalus* with so extensive a range. Their low catalogue number indicates that the specimens were collected in the first half of last century. Consequently "Preiss" must be the German naturalist J. A. L. Preiss, who resided in the Swan River district from 1838 to 1842 and collected, among many other things, 60-80 reptiles (Whittell, 1954).

Since Mertens was satisfied that *punctatus* Sternfeld was identical with *plagiocephalus* Coeteau, the latter may be restricted to Western Australia and, in view of the following, more precisely to the Swan River.

In the vicinity of Esperanee *Ablepharus boutonii* differs markedly from *plagiocephalus* as redefined by Mertens and as exemplified by 31 specimens in the Zoology Department from the area between the mouth of the Murehison River and Salmon Gums. The Esperanee population is described as

Ablepharus boutonii clarus subsp. nov.

Cotypes: 4 specimens in the Zoology Department, University of Western Australia, collected by the writer on December 10, 1959, along the lower Dalyup River in lat. 33° 45' S and long. 121° 32' E, i.e., 20 miles WNW of Esperanee, Western Australia.

Paratypes: Esperanee (1 specimen), 14 miles east of Esperanee (1) and Mondrain Island (2), all in the Zoology Department.



Dorsal view of two races of *Ablepharus boutonii* (*clarus* at top, *plagiocephalus* at bottom).

Description: Size, shape and scalation as in *plagioccephalus*, except for slightly fewer rows of midbody scales (20-24, mean 23.0) and slightly fewer lamellae under the fourth toe (16-18, mean 17.2). [The corresponding figures for our series of *plagioccephalus* are 20-28 (24.6) and 15-20 (18.2).]

As in *plagioccephalus*, the anterior margin of the post-nasal in a minority of specimens is merely indicated by a groove. Largest specimen (from Mondrain Island): 88 mm. (42 + 46)—the tail has regenerated.

The two races are readily distinguished on their colour and dorsal pattern. The most prominent feature in *clarus* is the clear-cut bluish white stripe along each side of the back; it begins on the snout and passes through the superciliaries back to and along the tail. Confluent with the superciliary stripe is a sharp-edged black stripe extending from the superoculars to the anterior part of the tail, where it meets its fellow from the opposite side. Both stripes are widest a little anterior of the hindlimbs. The central strip down the back is greyish, flecked with black. A black vertebral line extends from the posterior nuchals to the level of the forelimbs. Head greenish white, blotched with black. Flanks and upper surface of limbs grey, dotted with black and white. Ventrally pale blue (in alcohol).

[In *plagioccephalus* the superciliary stripe is pale brown and ragged-edged. Instead of a black superocular stripe, there is an irregular line of black spots. Mid-back, flanks and upper surface of limbs brown, dotted with black and pale brown. No vertebral line corresponding to that in *clarus*. Head brown, dotted with black. Ventrally brownish white.]

Distribution: South coast of Western Australia in vicinity of Esperance, including at least Mondrain Island in the Archipelago of the Recherche.

Remarks: It may seem strange that *clarus* should be more similar in colour and meristics to distant *virgatus* than to neighbouring *plagioccephalus*. A possible explanation is that the area between Rockhampton and southern South Australia is occupied by populations that bridge the small morphological gap between *virgatus* and *clarus*. The specimen from Hornsby, N.S.W., briefly described by Loveridge (1934), evidently belongs to some such intermediate form. It is clearly not *plagioccephalus*, under which it is listed by Loveridge, who was doubtless influenced by the range given by Mertens to that race.

REFERENCES

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